

Ours Is a Circle That Never Ends

YOU DO IT BECAUSE YOU UNDERSTAND THAT
WHATEVER YOU HAVE, YOU HAVE TO
GIVE TO THE PEOPLE

Agnes Williams: Good Morning, Fleeta.

Fleeta Hill: Good Morning (laughter).

One of the things I was interested in talking about today is your work and also what you see as your role in the community. You already mentioned that you are a "runner." What does that mean?

I attend all the meetings
The chief's meetings and the
Clan meetings
For the Clan Mother.
I can't make any decisions,
but I have toooo
Take back all of the information to her
And then,
I bring back her decisions to the meetings.
And I'm also her ears,
I'm really learning, lots of things
Because I have to look at
A lot of people's places
their welfare
their happiness
Everything that a person is supposed
to have
As a person - that she's (Clan Mother)
in charge
You know, she's kind of like the Mother of.

So I have to go and report to her
Everything that happens.
If anybody is having problems,
Then, I go and report to her everything.
And then, she makes the decisions,
Whatever she can do from there.

A lot of people, when they talk about women's roles in this society, a lot of people say that the oldest profession around is that of prostitution but as Native People, I feel that the oldest profession around is motherhood and it's an honorable profession and that it's a profession that should be promoted and talked about more. People do not think of it as a profession and it is a really big job. And being a Clan Mother is, I think, a part of that, a big part. Maybe, you could describe some of the things, when we say Clan Mother, what does a Clan Mother do? What is a Clan Mother about?

First of all when we are talking
about women,
I have to drop you a good bomb shell
You guys in the women's movement
Are way behind us, us Senecas.
Because we've had all kinds of
women power,
From time, from time beginning.
You have a lot to learn from
Indian women.

The position of Motherhood in the Indian world is

Is continuity of the race
And continuity of the race means
The continuity of our way of life,
and our beliefs
Handed down to the seven generations
unborn.

According to the way,
That the Creator gave us.

So, it' really is not aaaaa
It's soooo, it's soooo, ah ingrained to us,
It doesn't become any kind of a thing,
Outside of your life, it's,
It is you.

So the public and the private life are one?
There's no separation between the public
and the private life?

Your prime responsibility is your...
Invested with the land.
The women are with the land
And the future generations.
And the responsibility -
That the land keeps on going forever.
And so, you make sure,
You have someone in there
To care forever for your people
For the children.

A lot of people talk about, there's a lot of romanticism about Native people. A lot of people will say, we should "Honor our Mother Earth." It's a real catch phrase these days, I'm wondering what this means to you, "honor Mother Earth?"

Well... I don't know... if you have a word for Honor

I can't think of one right now.
Most of it is, is the realization that,
This IS our job. And you do it.
You do it because you understand that

What ever you have, you have to
GIVE TO THE PEOPLE

That's our only link, to ahhh to what
What I think people call this,
To... IMMORTALITY

And I really
That might be the wrong word.
But, OURS IS A CIRCLE THAT
NEVER ENDS

And we have to keep the spokes going
Keep the things going around and around.
And that's the way we look at it:

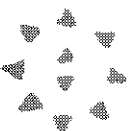
But, it's such a part of what you
are anyway,

That you don't look at it,
As being a separate issue.

I think, that maybe the hardest part
to explain

Is Clan Mothership.

Because of that, it's so, it's so
It is part of you, IT IS YOUR JOB,
It isn't separate, it doesn't become
separate.



EXCURSIONS

It's ver
What r
job
In the s
Like w

So real
duties

ONLY
IF you
IF you,
WHAT
And yo
Toward
WH
And th
Yes, ar
WE AR

Your, Y
With st
From t
To the
And ou
Come
So, the
In your
You ha

You ha
YOU'R
And th
com
That's
com
The Cr
For us
To be t
To und

And th
But for
Mind y
It's got
that

Beaus
That h
We're
We're
und
Alliiii
Is left
I don't
you
But, th

Fleeta E
time of
Mother.
a Pbd. c
Buffalo,

It's very difficult for me to tell you
What my job is, what a Clan Mother's
job is.
In the society because it is so normal,
Like washing dishes.

So really anybody could be, could do the
duties of a Clan Mother?

ONLY IF YOU FOLLOW EVERYTHING
IF you speak the language
IF you, if you LIVE and UNDERSTAND
WHAT YOU BELIEVE IN.
And you understand your responsibilities
Toward the CREATOR and that
WHOLE UNIVERSE
And that **WHOLE** Idea of Life.
Yes, anybody can, as a matter of fact,
WE ARE ALL SUPPOSED TO BE.

Your, YOU come, WE come,
With **strict rules and regulations**
From the CREATOR and that's down
To the **Sea of People.**
And out of the Sea of People
Come those people.
So, therefore, your responsibility
In your society, is as, is as important
You have to be that, in order to...

You have to understand that and
YOU'RE IN THAT SEA
And that's where all those people
come from.

**That's where your maintenance
comes from.**
The Creator left that really nice
For us people.
To be that link,
To understand all of that in nature.

And the rest of nature, it's there.

But for us, for his way of life,
Mind you,
It's got to be **People** who carry
that around.

Because **we are the ones,**
That have the minds
We're the ones that speak it
We're the ones that are expected to
understand.

Allllll that responsibility.
Is left to us **TO DO.**
I don't know if I'm answering
your question,

But, that is the way I see it. ♦

*Fleeta Hill is a Seneca Clan Mother who, at the
time of this interview, was the assistant to the Clan
Mother. Agnes Williams is a Seneca woman who is
a Phd. candidate at the University of New York,
Buffalo, NY.*



gotta sing, gotta dance

M.A. Barkhouse

Mary Anne Barkhouse
Gotta Sing, Gotta Dance
5¾ inches x 8¼ inches
1991